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as in the instances Dr Lowie quotes, sometimes grotesquely inaccurate is well known; that it is sometimes extraordinarily accurate and often generally correct is equally a matter of record. Absolutely unqualified statements like that of Dr Lowie's are usually dangerous.

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#### DR. SWANTON'S REPLY

THE point raised by Dr Lowie is one deserving consideration. I think, however, that he has made a misstatement in the first instance by saying that Dr Dixon and I "repeatedly use the native statements of origin and migration when other data in the shape of ethnological, linguistic, or archeological information are not available or are at least not cited." As a matter of fact, the number of cases in which we depend solely on traditional evidence is small.

As to the value of traditional evidence itself my experience may be different from that of Dr Lowie. It is true that much of that evidence is unreliable but in one particular I have found a very considerable measure of reliability, viz., as to the region, or at least the direction, from which the tribe came. I am not here referring merely to testimony drawn from myths or migration legends but to the opinion current in the tribe or shared by the older members of it. On the basis of my own experience, I would say that in the cases which we can check up the supplementary evidence confirms the tradition about nine times out of every ten. In cases which we cannot check up we therefore find a preponderance of probability that the tradition of origin has a historical basis. At least I consider the statement "I cannot attach to oral traditions any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever" unwarrantable, as unwarrantable as if I should say "I cannot attach to resemblances based on anthropometric measurements any historical value whatsoever under any conditions whatsoever."

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#### INTERPRETING CEREMONIALISM

EVOLUTIONARY theory has worked for harm as well as for good in ethnology. Its career began virtuously enough in routing out both the religious and the rationalistic<sup>1</sup> theories of social origins; but then, arro-

<sup>1</sup> Rationalistic, juridical theory was driven back, but perhaps hardly routed. For in the explanation of society as a bed of fossilized customs, any practice, however grotesque, may be assumed to have been reasonable when it originated, a compromise that has made the theory of survivals fairly acceptable to the legal mind.